

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A system including:

one or more business entities defining a head of a supply chain;

one or more sets of tiers of suppliers, wherein each said set of tiers is disposed in an extended supply chain;

a workstation coupled to said one or more business entities and said one or more sets of tiers of suppliers;

a database including information from said one or more sets of tiers of suppliers relating to one or more contracts and one or more of the following: price, inventory, delivery schedules, backorders and supply interruptions, exceptional events, and past transactions;

a dictionary of translations that can be used to translate the content of transitive information in said information from said one or more sets of tiers of suppliers for cross-tier communication in said extended supply chain; [[and]]

an order collaboration system coupled to said workstation, whereby said one or more business entities can view updates to supply chain conditions for said plurality of said tiers, said order collaboration system operative to transmit a portion of the content of the transitive information to the business entities in response to a security parameter, and said order collaboration system further operative to determine contract compliance among the tiers of suppliers in response to one of the following: price, inventory, delivery schedules, backorders and supply interruptions, exceptional events, and past transactions.

2. (Original) A system as in claim 1, including an aggregation element for aggregation of information relating to one or more products associated with said one or more business entities, wherein said information is stored in said database.

3. (Original) A system as in claim 2, including a presentation element, wherein said presentation element presents aggregated information to said one or more business entities, wherein said one or more business entities can review aggregated supply chain conditions for the extended supply chain for an enterprise in which the one or more business entities is included; and wherein said one or more business entities can obtain supply chain information from which it can determine, for each part used in any one of a set of multiple products, set of supply chain information aggregated over said one or more business entities individual enterprise.

4. (Original) A system as in claim 2, wherein said aggregation element includes a performance evaluation element capable of collecting and analyzing information regarding supply chain performance of multiple tiers of suppliers.

5. (Original) A system as in claim 2, wherein said information regarding supply chain performance includes at least one of: costs, ship dates, evaluation regarding whether a selected supplier performed well with regard to price adjustments, with regard to promised supply amounts or deliver schedules, whether the selected supplier has had an unusual number of quality defects, or whether there have been an unusual number of supply chain exceptions for that supplier.

6. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 2, including a brokering module that is part of a hub or logically distinct from said hub and acts on that information on dearth and surplus of parts and products to attempt to broker deals between or among entities that have dearth and surplus of the same part or product, wherein the dearth and surplus are eliminated or mitigated.

7. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 6, where said information is received from said aggregation module.

8. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 6, where one or more said entities with dearth in a certain said part or product can be matched with one or more said entities with surplus in the same said part or product.

9. (Original) A system as in claim 8, where said brokering module brokers a deal among one or more said entities with said dearth and one or more said entities with said surplus.

10. (Original) A system as in claim 9, where each said entity can choose whether they would like to participate in the brokered deal.

11. (Original) A system as in claim 10, where the identity of each said entity is kept secret until after said brokered deal is complete, whereby said entities cannot broker said deal without said hub.

12. (Original) A system as in claim 8, where said entities are only matched within brokering groups, where a single said brokering group contains zero or more said entities, and the group of said entities can be within a single supply chain, across supply chains, or from within and outside of any number of supply chains.

13. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 12, where each of said entities can be part of zero or more brokering groups.

14. (Original) A system as in claim 13, where each said brokering group can be assigned by said hub or by another said entity acting with authority from said hub.

15. (Original) A system as in claim 13, where said entities can opt to and refuse to participate in said brokering group.

16. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 2, wherein said information transferred across the supply chain is done so via said hub;

said messages contain reference to one or more said messages that are its causal antecedents;

said references contained are analyzed by said aggregation element;

said aggregation element uses the analysis to build said dictionary;

said analysis is stored in said database; and

said dictionary can be reported to said one or more business entities or said suppliers via said order collaboration system.

17. (Original) A system as in claim 1, including a feedback element capable of obtaining feedback information for a design process in response to supply chain performance.

18. (Original) A system as in claim 17, wherein said feedback information includes information relating to at least one of: selected preferred parts, selected preferred suppliers at one of said multiple tiers, selected parts that do not require new approval for use, selected preferred suppliers that do not need approval.

19. (Currently Amended) A system as in claim 1, including a compliance element capable of reviewing and enforcing compliance with contract terms between the one or more business entities and its suppliers, wherein contract compliance includes at least one of : delivery price, delivery quantity, price-quantity breakpoints, terms for parts returns, and delivery methods.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) A system as in claim 1, including an allocation element capable of directing said suppliers to allocate parts in short supply to selected projects.

22. (Original) A system as in claim 1, including a blind-design element capable of directing said suppliers to use any design that meets design specifications.

23. (Original) A system as in claim 22, wherein said blind-design element is responsive to a comparison of an estimated cost of optimization and an estimated possible cost savings due to design specification.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for operating an order collaboration system for an extended supply chain, including steps of

receiving a request from one or more business entities regarding supply chain information relevant to one or more designs or parts used in designs;

determining which data is relevant to said request, wherein said data is derived from one or more suppliers across one or more supply chains or past business records associated with said manufacture and is related to terms of a contract and at least one of the following: price of at least one electronic or computer part, quantity available of said electronic or computer part, delivery schedules for said electronic or computer part, backorders, supply interruptions, exceptional events, and said data is stored in a database coupled to a hub;

translating, for cross-tier communication in said extended supply chain, the content of transitive information in said data using a dictionary of translations of the content of said transitive information;

aggregating said data in such a way that said aggregated data is responsive to said request, and responsive to a security parameter; and

generating a report and presenting said report to said one or more business entities, wherein said report is responsive to said request, indicates contract compliance and identifies the terms of said contract related to said request.

25. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein said request pertains to determining whether a contract manufacturer is complying with the terms of said contract, wherein complying with the terms of said contract includes at least one of: delivery price, delivery quantity, price-quantity breakpoints, terms for parts returns, and delivery methods.

26. (Original) A method as in claim 24, wherein said request pertains to comparing the overall projected cost of a particular design based upon prices from multiple suppliers.

27. (Original) A method as in claim 24, wherein said request pertains to determining the most cost efficient way to manufacture a design.

28. (Original) A method as in claim 24, wherein said step of aggregating includes evaluating the supply chain performance of multiple tiers of suppliers.

29. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 24, including a step of directing said suppliers to allocate parts in short supply to selected projects.

30. (Original) A method as in claim 24, including a step of directing said suppliers to use any design that meets design specifications based upon a comparison of an estimated cost of optimization and an estimated possible cost savings due to design specification.

31. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein said step of aggregating includes a step of analyzing messages transferred through the hub and constructing said dictionary using information passed in the messages.

32. (Original) A method as in claim 24, wherein said step of aggregating includes determining dearth and surplus of parts and products at all known suppliers, manufacturers and other entities.

33. (Original) A method as in claim 32, wherein one or more said suppliers, manufacturers, or other said entities with said dearth in a certain said part or product are matched with one or more said suppliers, manufacturers, or other said entities with said surplus in the same said part or product.

34. (Original) A method as in claim 33, wherein a deal is brokered among one or more said suppliers, manufacturers, or other said entities with said dearth in a certain said part or product and one or more said suppliers, manufacturers, or other said entities with said surplus in the same said part or product.

35. (Original) A method as in claim 34, wherein said deal is brokered only among said suppliers, manufacturers, and other said entities within the same said brokering group, where said brokering group is a set of zero or more said suppliers, manufacturers, other said entities, and other said brokering groups.

36. (Original) A method as in claim 35, wherein said suppliers, manufacturers, and other said entities can be in zero or more brokering groups.

37. (Original) A method as in claim 35, wherein said suppliers, manufacturers, and other said entities can opt to be in or can opt to be excluded from each said brokering group.